



Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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1. Shotgun Deer Season Preview – by Joe Wilkinson
2. Clock is Ticking to Register Land
3. New Harvest Reporting System Awaits Shotgun Deer Seasons
4. Boone River Protected Water Area Selected as Pilot Project

[Hold this story until Nov. 30]

SHOTGUN DEER SEASON PREVIEW

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Another December, another deer season. And nearly 200,000 of us are finalizing plans to pursue Iowa's biggest big game.

Tens of thousands of hunters have been hunting whitetails already. Bow season has been underway for eight weeks. Early muzzleloader season, the youth season, the three-day November 'doe' season have come and gone. For most hunters, though, deer *season* begins on a December Saturday, as parties of shotgun hunters head to the woods. First season shotgunners, about 120,000 of them, head out December 2-6. About 75,000 second season hunters have December 9-17 to bring home the venison.

"Shotgun hunters are going to have a good year," forecasts Willy Suchy, deer biologist for the Department of Natural Resources. "There will be good deer numbers; maybe down in some areas a little bit. We have put a lot of emphasis on taking antlerless deer and hunters need to continue working on it." He anticipates about 100,000 whitetails being taken during the two shotgun seasons.

Responding to calls to reduce the deer herd over the last few years, Iowa hunters have snapped up county-specific antlerless tags; putting more pressure on counties with more deer. Winter surveys showed those goals were being met in some areas. As a result, the antlerless permits were not offered across 21 north central and northwest Iowa

counties. Most counties *with* antlerless tags have sold out. “There are tags left in northeast Iowa and southern Iowa,” says Suchy. “That’s where the populations are strongest. We can use extra antlerless harvest in those areas.”

Riding with officers over the years, I’ve noticed maybe in the last two or three years that a group of hunters will have their regular tags, and a couple antlerless tags, as well. That allows them to take a doe, but still hold that ‘any sex’ (meaning buck) tag, in case a big one comes by. I’m using a county antlerless tag in second shotgun season, to keep an any sex late muzzleloader tag available.

Hunters have been urged to pass on that small-racked buck and take a doe in the past few years. In some places, they are starting to see results. “We’ve been taking more antlerless deer; letting some of the younger bucks grow up”, notes Suchy. “We should have tremendous quality out there; just maybe a few less deer total.”

And shotgun season means deer drives, for most December gun hunters. If your drives have been working well, great. If not, consider fine-tuning things. “Use the wind (deer prefer to escape into or across the wind). Use the cover,” advises Suchy. “Deer get used to people walking through the big timber. They’re off on the sides; the wooded draw, the fence row. Hunters should remember those areas.” Suchy says grassy CRP slopes are great places to surprise a hiding deer. Or two.

More than anything, those deer drives should be carefully orchestrated, too. Standers should know exactly where they should post themselves. Drivers should know exactly where they will emerge. Cover those bases and it should be another great hunting year.

Safety First, Includes Blinds

Pop up blinds; advantage or accident waiting to happen? It’s a question more and more hunters ask, with the emergence of the small tent-type blinds dotting fence lines and hillsides during deer season.

The camouflage blind, with dark mesh ports, masks any movement from the hunter inside; allowing him a 360-degree view of the terrain around him. They get high marks from some bowhunters or spring turkey hunters. With those blaze-orange shotgun season vests also hidden, though, it prevents other hunters from seeing them. “We are getting more and more people using them during the shotgun season. The concern, obviously, is whether a shot would come from another hunter, not knowing there was a person concealed in the area,” explains DNR recreation safety officer Ken Kenyon.

Iowa law specifies a gun-season deer hunter must wear blaze orange; a vest, coveralls or jacket, so the blind itself is not illegal. Still, safety officials urge hunters to provide some signal that the blind is there and that some one is inside. “Some sort of a blaze orange flag; maybe another vest across the top; even strips of orange flagging tape to mark when you are in there,” suggests Kenyon. “It’s not mandatory, but it’s very good

idea.” That’s also a great safety tip for other concealed locations; such as ‘towers’ or elevated stands that sometimes resemble small cabins.

Kenyon also points to more traditional safety concerns before shotgun season hunters step into the deer woods. “Swinging on game and not making sure of your backstop on a shot are the two leading factors in hunting incidents,” says Kenyon, in light of Iowa’s party hunting system, with drivers and blockers/standers. “We urge your party to set up a plan for each drive...and then *stick* to that plan. You should always know where the others in your party are.”

And as you meet the blaze orange requirements, why not add more? “The first thing another hunter sees as you come over a rise is your head,” notes Kenyon. “Why not add a blaze orange cap?”

HUSH=Deer for Needy

Hunters with an extra deer can drop it off for processing through the HUSH (Help Us Stop Hunger) program again this season. Any legally taken deer can be taken to one of 80 lockers, where it will be processed into two-pound bags of ground venison and then distributed to needy families in the area. Each deer tag carries a \$1 surcharge to fund HUSH. A locker receives \$60 to process the deer. The Food Bank of Iowa and its affiliates coordinates the distribution; receiving \$5 for each deer, to cover costs. Hunters donated nearly 6,000 deer to HUSH last year.

CLOCK IS TICKING TO REGISTER LAND

BOONE - Landowners and tenants who plan to hunt during the shotgun deer seasons but have not yet registered for reduced-fee licenses, should plan to do so online at www.iowadnr.com. By registering online, landowners and tenants may obtain their licenses immediately.

The DNR will continue to accept Landowner/Tenant forms sent through the mail, but cannot guarantee these forms will be processed by the start of shotgun deer season.

Registrants who are uncertain of their parcel identification number should contact their county treasurer or assessor. As of Monday afternoon, 41,500 Iowans have registered land as a landowner or tenant to obtain reduced-fee licenses.

[an electronic image of a deer tag with highlighted areas is available]

NEW HARVEST REPORTING SYSTEM AWAITS SHOTGUN DEER HUNTERS

DES MOINES – An estimated 190,000 hunters will be pursuing Iowa whitetails during December's two shotgun deer hunting seasons, and those who harvest a deer must now report that harvest to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Successful deer hunters must report the harvest by midnight of the day after it is killed, before taking it to a locker, before processing it for consumption or before leaving the state.

How to Report a Harvest

Step one is to write the date of the kill on the tag, then tag the deer.

Step two is to enter the nine-digit harvest registration number either by going to www.iowadnr.com and clicking on the harvest reporting button on the right side of the website, or by calling the phone system at 1-800-771-4692, which is printed on the tag.

The nine-digit harvest registration number is located on the lower half of the tag, on the left side. It is always a nine-digit number, displayed as three groups of three numbers. To report, deer hunters will need to provide this harvest registration number and the Iowa county where the animal was harvested, as well as the sex of the animal. Only report the harvest registration number from the tag on the deer.

Finally, hunters will receive a confirmation number that must be written on the transportation tag for the report to be considered complete. There is a box provided for the confirmation number on the tag, just below the license registration number. All the instructions are on the deer tags.

If no animal is harvested, no report is necessary.

For more information, contact Mick Klemesrud at 515-281-8653.

BOONE RIVER PROTECTED WATER AREA SELECTED AS PILOT PROJECT

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources selected the Boone River Protected Water Area (PWA) for a pilot project to demonstrate new techniques in

working with landowners and community members to protect the scenic and cultural heritage of the Boone River, and to develop support for cleaner water.

The Boone River project was selected due to a high degree of citizen and agency support and the presence of a new watershed association called the Boone River Watershed Association.

“Folks in the Boone River Protected Water Area appear eager to team up with us to develop new strategies that we hope leave this river well-protected for our kids and grandkids,” said Nate Hooegeveen, water trails coordinator for the Iowa DNR. “It was a tough choice. What we learned by conducting statewide workshops was that many people care deeply about a river in their own region.”

Iowa DNR staff will begin partnering with the Boone River PWA in December with a kick-off workshop. Local agency partners and community members will determine specifics of the plan with Iowa DNR facilitation.

For more information, contact Nate Hooegeveen, Protected Water Areas planning coordinator, Iowa DNR, at 515-281-3134.